

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A method for creating a multi-level business alliance of independent firms, the method comprising the steps of:

creating an alliance between a founding firm and at least one firm in a first level based on predefined rules;

allowing the founding firm and the firm in the first level to use predefined rules to sign up at least one firm in a second level;

allowing the firm in the second level to use predefined rules to sign up at least one firm in a third level;

providing each firm in the multi-level business alliance the opportunity to access to the resources of other firms in the alliance;

enabling firms in the multi-level business alliance to share revenue based on predefined rules; and

accepting firms in the multi-level business alliance that potentially provide a service that is desirable to alliance members.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of enabling firms of the multi-level business alliance to share revenue based on each firm's position in the multi-level alliance and based on relationships between the firm whose client is being served and other firms that are in higher levels of the multi-level business alliance.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of defining the firm in the first level as a foundation firm.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of requiring that the foundation firm is not in the same geographical area as founding firm.
5. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of allowing the foundation firm to be a predetermined size.
6. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of allowing the size of each foundation firm to vary from one geographical area to a next geographical area depending on the size of the founding firm in the same geographical area.
7. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of allowing multiple foundation firms in the same geographical area.
8. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of allowing the second level firm to be in the same geographical area as the founding firm or the foundation firm and wherein the second level firm is smaller than the founding firm and the foundation firm.
9. (Original) The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of allowing the second level firm to be in the same geographical area as the founding firm or the foundation firm, and wherein the second level firm is larger than the founding firm and the foundation firm.
10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of allowing the third level firm to be in the same geographical area as the second level firm that introduces the third level firm to the alliance, and wherein the third level firm is smaller than the signing second level firm.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of allowing the third level firm to be in the same geographical area as the second level firm that introduces the third level firm to the alliance, and wherein the third level firm is larger than the signing second level firm.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using predefined criteria to determine each firm's levels in the alliance structure.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using laws, in each jurisdiction where there is an alliance firm, to determine how revenue is shared among the alliance firms.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of using laws, in each jurisdiction where there is an alliance firm, to determine whether revenue is shared among the alliance firms.

16.(Original). The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of establishing how revenue should be shared based on criteria defined by a third party.

17. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of establishing how revenue should be shared based on criteria defined by all of the alliance firms.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

requiring each firm in the first level to pay the founding firm a licensing fee and wherein the firm in the first level and the founding firm share revenue based on a predetermined formula;

requiring each firm in the second level to pay a licensing fee to a parent firm in the first level and to the founding firm;

requiring each firm in the third level to pay a licensing fee which would be payable to a parent in the second level that introduced the firm in the third level to the alliance, a parent firm in the first level that introduced the parent firm in the second level to the alliance, and the founding firm.

19. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of allowing alliance firms in the first, second and third levels to share work and to establish an acceptable revenue sharing agreement.

20. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of allowing alliance firms in the first, second and third levels to refer clients to each other and to establish an acceptable referral agreement.

21. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of allowing alliance firms in the first, second and third levels to refer clients to each other and to establish an acceptable referral agreement, wherein the referral agreement requires that a portion of a referral fee is paid to the founding firm.

22. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of allowing the founding firm to provide a service to a client of a second firm in the alliance structure and allowing the

founding firm to use a predetermined formula to split a referral fee between the second firm and parent firms in higher levels of the alliance structure that introduced the second firm to the alliance.

23. (Original) A method for creating a multi-level business alliance, the method comprising the steps of:

creating an alliance between a plurality of independent firms based on predefined rules, wherein the predefined rules determine each firm's position in a multi-level business alliance;

providing each firm in the multi-level business alliance an opportunity to access the resources of other firms in the multiple-level business alliance;

enabling at least two firms in the multi-level business alliance to share revenue based on a predefined formula; and

accepting only those firms in the multi-level business alliance that provide service that is desirable to alliance firms.

24. (Original) A method for creating a multi-level business alliance, the method comprising the steps of:

creating an alliance between a plurality of independent firms based on predefined rules, wherein the predefined rules determine each firm's position in a multi-level business alliance;

requiring each firm that is not in the highest level of the multi-level business alliance to pay a licensing fee, wherein predefined rules are used to divide the licensing fee between parent firms in higher levels of the multi-level business alliance;

providing each firm in the multi-level business alliance the opportunity to access the resources of other firms in the multi-level business alliance;

sharing revenue among a plurality of firms based on a predefined formula; and
accepting firms to the multi-level business alliance to provide service that is desirable to
alliance firms.

25. (Added) A method for creating a multi-level business alliance, the method comprising the
steps of:

creating an alliance between a plurality of independent firms based on predefined rules
established by a founding firm, wherein the predefined rules determine each firm's position in a
multi-level business alliance;

using the predefined rules to determine each firm in the multi-level business alliance
access the resources of other firms in the multiple-level business alliance;

using the predefined rules to determine whether firms in the multi-level business alliance
are allowed to share revenue; and

accepting only those firms in the multi-level business alliance that provide service that is
desirable to alliance firms.

26. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules allow firms in the multi-
level business alliance to access the resources of the founding firm at a predefined standard rate.

27. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules require firms in the multi-
level business alliance to refer business to the founding firm on a predetermined basis.

28. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules require firms in the multi-level business alliance to pay a licensing fee to the founding firm.

29. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules require firms in the multi-level business alliance to pay an annual fee to the founding firm based on a percentage of each firm in the multi-level business alliance billing.

30. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules allow firms in the multi-level business alliance to use a predefined logo.

31. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules allow firms in the multi-level business alliance to participate in certain professional organizations.

32. (Added) The method of claim 25, wherein the predefined rules allow a firm in one profession to join an alliance of firms from at least one other profession.

33. (Added) The method of claim 32, wherein a firm in a first profession must join an alliance of firms from the first profession prior to joining an alliance of firms from at least one other profession.

34. (Added) The method of claim 32, wherein a firm in a first industry group must join an alliance of firms from the first industry group prior to joining an alliance of firms from at least one other industry group.